

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-3, 5-11, 14-20 are pending. Claims 1, 2, 5, 11, and 20 are amended. Claims 4, 12, and 13 are cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claims 1 and 11 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 3-5 and 13-15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Applicant appreciates the Examiner's early indication of allowable subject matter. In response, independent claim 1 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 4; and independent claim 11 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 13 and intervening claim 12.

Therefore, independent claims 1 and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Claim for Priority

The Examiner has acknowledged the Applicant's claim for foreign priority based on Japanese Patent Application No. 2002-381247.

Objection to the Specification

The Examiner has objected to the specification because an informality in paragraph [0042]. In order to overcome this objection, paragraph [0042] has been amended, to address each of the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 1-20 because of several informalities. In order to overcome this objection, Applicants have amended claims 1, 2, and 11 in order to correct the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and 103(a)

Claims 1 and 6-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Bahr (U.S. 2,106,992),

claims 1, 2, 9-12, 19, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over AAPA in view of Bahr,

claims 11 and 16-19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ebara (U.S. 6,547,426) in view of Bahr, and

claim 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ebara in view of Bahr, and further in view of AAPA.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As noted above, and while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 4.

In addition, as noted above, and while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 11 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 13 and intervening claim 12.

Therefore, independent claims 1 and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Dependent claims 4, 12, and 13 are cancelled.

The Examiner will note that dependent claims 2, 5, and 20 are amended to place them in better form.

All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has

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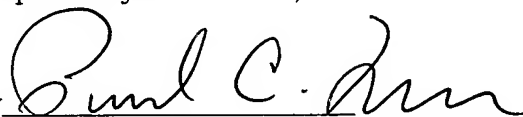
been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 
James M. Slattery
Registration No.: 28,380 #43,368
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP
8110 Gatehouse Rd
Suite 100 East
P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000
Attorney for Applicant

for

Attachments